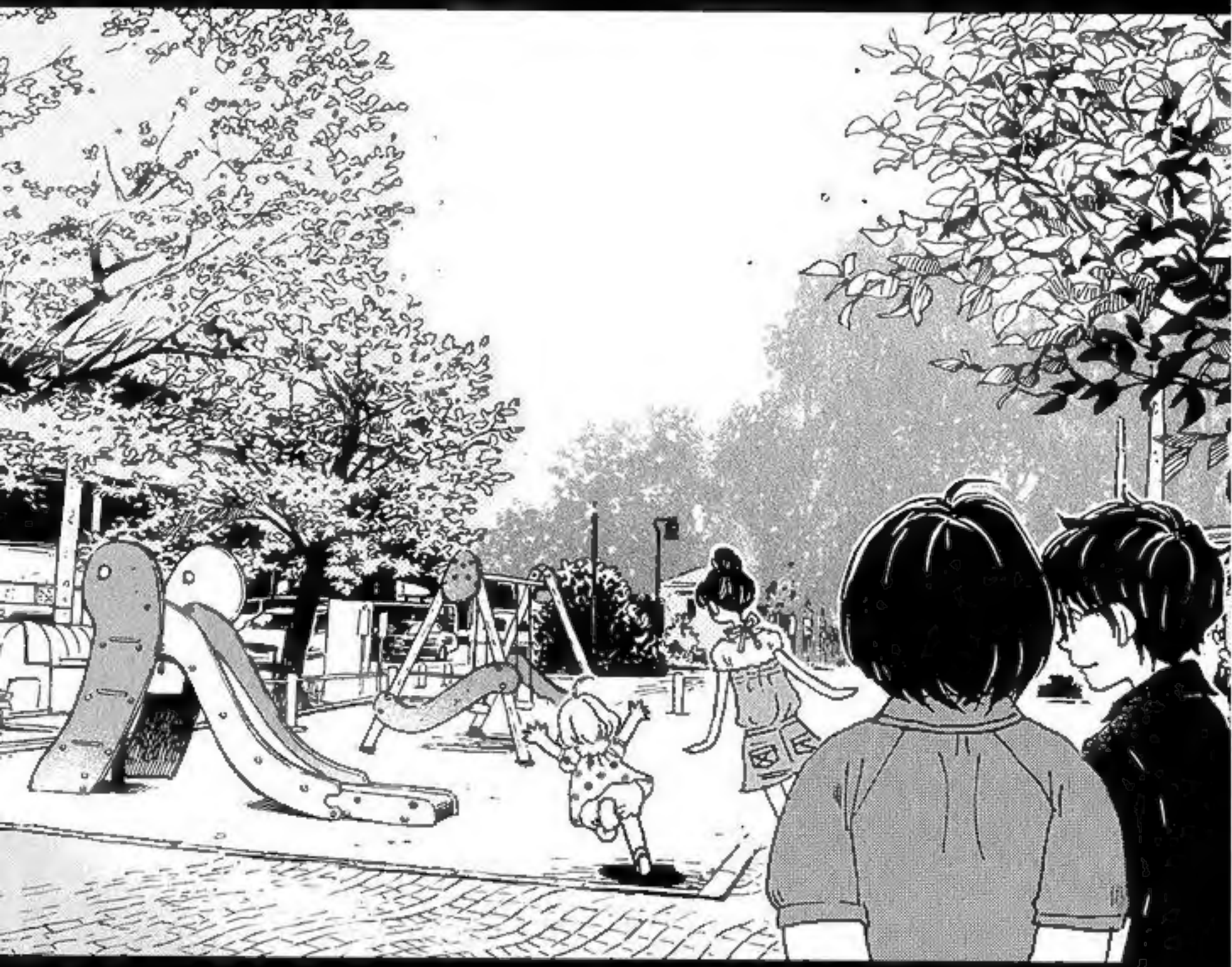
Chapter 77

White Storm ⑤



UM...

WHEN DID IT START?

YEAH ...

HM, IT'S BEEN A WHILE...

JUST UNDER 10 YEARS AGO, GIVE OR TAKE.

MAN, IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME.

SFX: ZAAAAAA

HE WOULD GO IN AND OUT

OF 'BEING ABLE TO HEAR' AND 'NOT BEING ABLE TO HEAR'.

AND

BEING THE GUY HE IS,

AT FIRST

HE WOULD GO TO THE HOSPITAL, BUT LATER DOWN THE LINE

SFX: ZAAAAAAA...

—THEY KEPT SAYING 'IT'S STRESS' AND COULDN'T DO A THING ABOUT IT.

WE WENT TO THE DOCTOR, BUT THEY COULDN'T FIND THE CAUSE.

HE WOULD SAY THINGS LIKE 'IT'S QUIET AND IT'S REALLY NOT A PROBLEM; DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT'...

when the platform that morning in Morioka popped into my mind.

'What about when he's talking to people?'

—Is what I was about to say,

I MEAN ...

WHAT...?

WOULDN'T HEARING THAT

GET YOU WORRIED?

HE WAS ALWAYS ALONE.

IN EVERY MEMORY I HAVE OF THIS PERSON

OR SEEN HIM LAUGHING AND TALKING WITH SOMEONE ...

I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM TRAVELING WITH ANYONE.

—I think it was the first time I won a children's tournament in elementary school...

When was that?

— In that case...

In that case, even back then

he was already...

SO THERE AREN'T TOO MANY.

BASICALLY THE ONLY PEOPLE PLAYING SOUYA

THOUGH,

ARE PEOPLE THAT GO UP AGAINST HIM AS CHALLENGERS IN TITLE MATCHES.

YEAH.

THE PEOPLE THAT GO UP AGAINST HIM IN MATCHES A LOT...

UM...

DOES ANYONE ELSE...

—IT SHOULDN'T REALLY BE A PROBLEM.

I JUST NEED TO FINISH MY GAMES BEFORE THE COUNTDOWNS BEGIN, RIGHT?

BUT BECAUSE THERE WOULD BE SOME DRAWBACKS TO IT BEING PUBLIC, HE SAID TO KEEP QUIET ABOUT IT.

WELL,

HE WASN'T PARTICULARLY TRYING TO HIDE IT,

I'M WORRIED

BUT HE'S PRETTY CAREFREE ABOUT IT.

YA KNOW,

HONESTLY,

—THAT'S WHAT HE SAID. DO YOU BELIEVE THAT?

EVEN IF HE SAYS TOTALLY OFF-THE-WALL THINGS,

PEOPLE JUST GO 'WELL, HE'S ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THAT.'

SO HE CAN PASS HIMSELF OFF PRETTY WELL.

BEEN THAT KIND OF PERSON GOING WAY BACK.

WELL, HE'S ACTUALLY

PEOPLE OBSERVING HIM END UP INTERPRETING THAT AS 'WELL, I GUESS THAT'S HOW YOU KNOW HE'S A GENIUS.'

AND HE LOOKED LIKE HE WAS GOING CRAZY LITTLE BY LITTLE,

AND THEY GOT REALLY INTO THAT WHOLE IDEA...

AS HE BECOME A DEMON AT SHOGI,

SO IRONICALLY,

ARE ALL PRETTY MUCH ALWAYS THE SAME IN BOTH ORDER AND CONTENT.

THE GREETINGS ALSO, AND QUESTIONS BEFORE AND AFTER MATCHES

SO AT THIS POINT, I CAN LEAVE HIM ALONE AND HE'LL BE OKAY.

HE GENERALLY JUST SLEEPS TILL MORNING.

ONCE HE GOES BACK TO HIS ROOM

THOUGH

SO YOU REALLY SAVED US BY PICKING HIM UP LIKE THAT.

THE BEST-OF-7 GYOKUSHOU CHAMPIONSHIP COMING UP NOT LONG AFTER THIS...

HE'S GOT

—I WAS NERVOUS HE'D BE WALKING AROUND IN THE RAIN LOOKING FOR A HOTEL.

BUT HONESTLY, YOU WERE A BIG HELP.

SFX: ZAAAAA

...I'm 18.

That about you being born in the Heisei era is a joke, right?

Are you a caring mother deep down?

ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE A KID FROM TODAY'S GENER-ATION?

YOU REALLY ARE SORTA... GOOD AT TAKING CARE OF PEOPLE.

—BUT KIRIYAMA,

I WAS THINKING BACK IN KYOTO.

That time with Shimada

IT LOOKED LIKE YOU WERE ABLE TO

CARRY OUT NORMAL COMMUN-ICATION WITH SOUYA ...

THAT WAS AN INTERESTING GAME.

BY THE WAY,

.....

HE KIND OF

SMILED.

— The next morning

when I woke up, the typhoon had passed.

SFX: GAAH

THE PAYMENT FOR YOUR STAY

WAS PAID BY THE MAN YOU CAME IN WITH, SOUYA-SAMA.

HUH?

UM... WHAT ABOUT THE BILL?

And when I went outside

Sendai's sky

was a nonsensical blue that spread out forever

The storm yesterday

felt so far away

it seemed like it had been a dream...

It didn't feel real at all.

like something a child had painted.

in the rain.

had walked together

that the two of us

Even though I was sure

I was able to attend class,

Starting from about 3

but maybe because I was so exhausted

and they didn't really go into my head much...

felt faintly distant

and the commotion in the classroom

the voice of the teacher

But

those sounds of the pieces
I heard at that place
just wouldn't

stop ringing...

SOUNDS LIKE THAT TYPHOON GAVE YOU A LOT OF TROUBLE.

AH, HEY, KIRIYAMA.

KIRIYAMA?

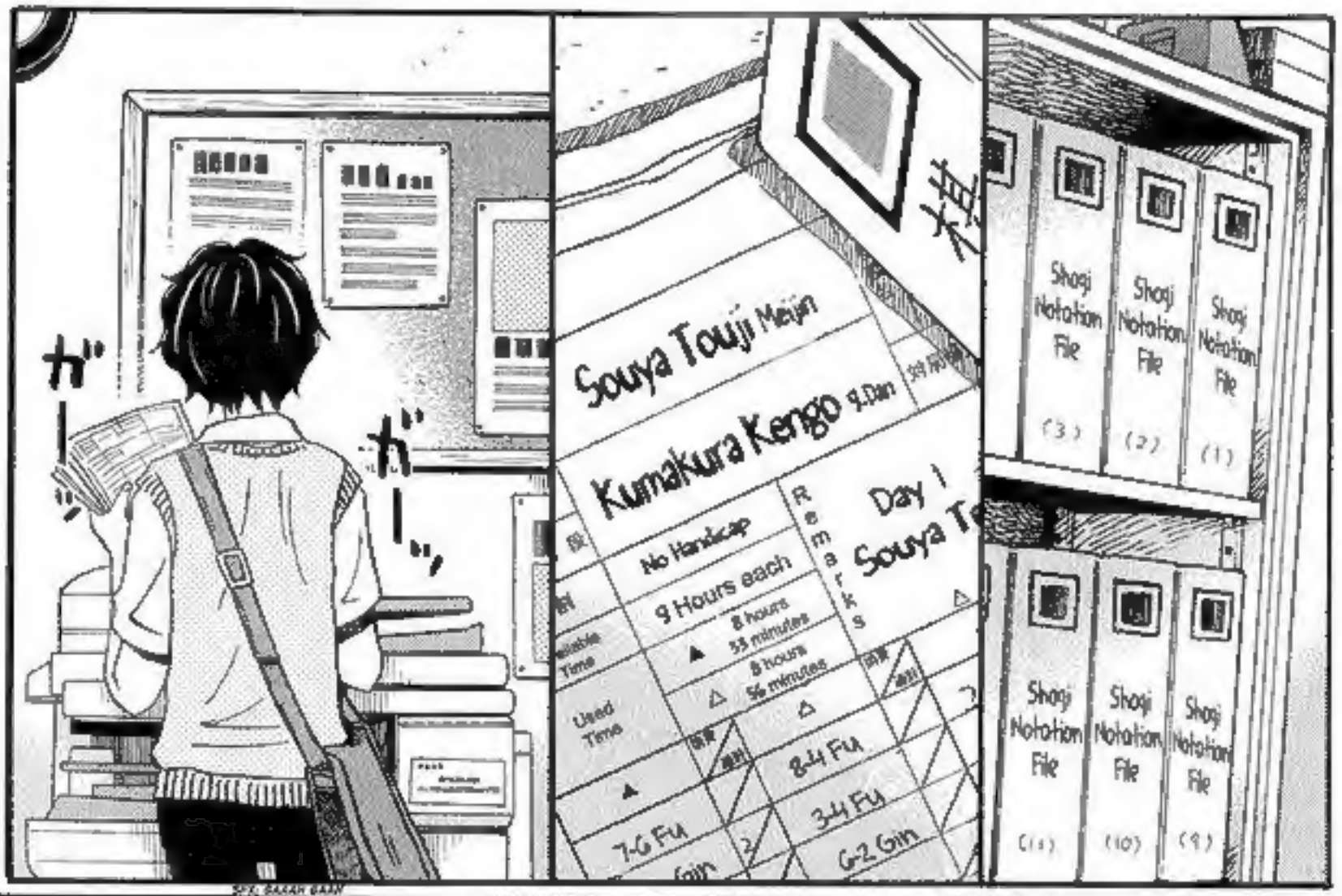
SFX: GAAAH

I GUESS HE'S GOTTA BE WORN OUT, GOING TO CLASS STRAIGHT FROM SENDAI.

WHAT'S WITH HIM? HE'S TOTALLY OUT OF IT.

School's got phys-ed and stuff like that, right? You need stamina for that.

Refer-ence Room



the ringing

just went on

and on.

Chapter. 77 END

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